

ARLINGTON FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
7:30PM O'NEIL ROOM COMMUNITY SAFETY BUILDING
3/21/12

ATTENDEES:

Bayer*	Padaria	Jenkins*	White*	McKenna*
DeCoursey*	Connors	Simmons*	Gibian*	
Tosti*	Foskett*	Deyst*	Ronan	
Ferrara*	Beck*	Jones*	Deshler*	
Franclemont*	Howard*	Fanning*	Carman	Turkall*

* Indicates present

MINUTES: The minutes of 3/14/12 were accepted as printed. Unanimous.

BUD 2 BoS: GenGov SubCom(Howard) made several corrections to the printed budget. He provided a detailed breakdown of the elections budget (Ref 3). Several items in this budget have increased substantially. VOTED \$388,479 for the total of the 4 sub budgets. Unanimous.

BUD 3 MANAGER: GenGov SubCom(Howard) requested reconsideration to correct an error. Longevity was counted twice. VOTED \$428,325. Unanimous.

BUD 4 PERSONNEL: Pers SubCom(White) recommended the budget as printed. The department does not have the additional position approved by Town Meeting last year because the Manager & Superintendent could not agree. There is a MOU between the 2 offices. The health insurance offset is not needed because of joining GIC, however the specialist will continue during the 1st GIC year. VOTED \$252,321 Unanimous

BUD 9 ASSESSORS: Finance SubCom(Beck) recommended deleting the map line item which is no longer needed. The department has the funds, \$65k, to pay for the reassessment next year. VOTED \$258,626 Unanimous

BUD 17d DPW NATURAL RESOURCES: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. The Town's share of holiday lights expense has increased as donations have fallen off. The earmarked \$110 from the override is included in Contract Services. VOTED \$1,150,501 Unanimous.

BUD 17 DPW TOWN FIELDS: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. Town pays first \$40k, users pay the rest which was \$60k last year. VOTED \$40,000. Unanimous

BUD 17b DPW ENGINEERING: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$112,136. Unanimous

BUD 17a ADMIN: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) corrected an error. The longevity was counted twice. VOTED \$219,772. Unanimous

BUD 17e DPW HIGHWAY: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$1,452,291. Unanimous

BUD 17a DPW SANITATION: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. The reduction from last year is because of the new 10 yr contract. The contract includes weekly recycling and a limit of three 30gal trash barrels or bags per household. Residents may arrange for additional trash pickup directly w/ the hauler at cost. VOTED \$40,000. Unanimous

BUD 17f DPW MOTOR EQUIP: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$349,789. Unanimous

BUD 17d PROPERTIES: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$270,000. Unanimous

BUD 17c DPW CEMETERIES: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$211,393. Unanimous

BUD 17g DPW STREET LIGHTS: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. The large decrease is because of the new LED lights. VOTED \$190,000 Unanimous

BUD 17 DPW TRAFFIC SIGNALS: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$76,700. Unanimous

BUD 17 DPW FIRE ALARMS: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$50,000. Unanimous

BUD 17 DPW SNOW & ICE: PubWks SubCom(Deshler) recommended the budget be increased. This budget may be exceeded if it was not previously reduced. Still the overall budget increase must be within 2.5%. The avg over the last 5 yrs is \$1.2m; over the last 10 yrs \$932k. After some discussion, VOTED \$700k, an increase of \$100k.15-1

BUD 18c FIRE: PubSafe SubCom(Bayer) reviewed the material he presented on 2/29. He answered various question posed at that mtg. 5211 Energy is electricity. Heating fuel is for Central Station. The emergency management stipend is for a specialist to handle FEMA claims. The various fuel costs were down when the engine companies were housed in trailers. He recommended the budget as printed. VOTED \$5,610,799. Unanimous.

BUD 19 INSPECTIONS PubSafe SubCom(Bayer) recommended the budget as printed. Inspection fees are \$1.4m so far this yr; expected to reach \$1.7m. VOTED \$420,100. Unanimous.

ART 23 2nd WATER METER: W&S SubCom(Ferrara) provided a memo and a memo from the DPW Director (Ref 5). Both recommend no action. The Chair asked members to read memos in preparation for a vote on Monday.

ART 42 W&S SubCom(Ferrara) recommended borrowing \$1.2m from MWRA for sewer repair and provided a recommended vote (Ref 4) VOTED \$1.2m. Unanimous.

ART 43 W&S SubCom(Ferrara) recommended borrowing \$950k from MWRA for water main repair and provided a recommended vote (Ref 4) VOTED \$1.2m. Unanimous.

COMMITTEE: Next mtg Mon 3/26.

Tosti provided a copy of 2010 TM Art 58 MM Tech Bond for Feasibility Study (Ref 1). The vote approved MM Tech's bond issue contingent on 7 conditions. He asked members to decide whether the school has met these conditions in preparation for a vote at a future mtg. He will email a statement drafted by the ad hoc MM Tech Committee.

Schools SubCom(Fanning) announced that the APS will deliver budget info on Fri in prep for hearing on Mon. He also provided lists giving the status of current grants and revolving funds (Ref 2). He will forward specific requests for info to the Superintendent.

RESERVE FUND BALANCE: \$618,975.

Peter Howard 3/22/12 Revised 3/26/12

cc FinCom Members, Town Web Site, Robbins Library

Ref 1 2010 TM Art 58 MM Tech Bond for Feasibility Study

Ref 2 Status of APS Grants & Revolving Funds

Ref 3 FY 13 Elections Budget

Ref 4 W&S Capital Articles

Ref 5 Second Water Meter Memos

Article 56 of the Warrant for the
Annual Town Meeting of the
Town of Arlington at the session
held May 24, 2010.
ATTEST:
Town Clerk

ARTICLE 57 APPROPRIATION/MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

VOTED: (UNANIMOUSLY) (QUORUM PRESENT)

That the sum of \$3,739,795 hereby is appropriated for the purpose of paying the Town's apportioned share of the operating and maintenance costs, including capital costs, of the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School District Budget; said sum to be raised by general tax and expended under the direction of the Minuteman Regional Vocational Technical High School Committee.

A true copy of the vote under
Article 57 of the Warrant for the
Annual Town Meeting of the
Town of Arlington at the session
held May 24, 2010.

ATTEST:
Town Clerk

**ARTICLE 58 MINUTEMAN REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL -BOND
AUTHORIZATION FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY**

VOTED: (UNANIMOUSLY) (QUORUM PRESENT)

That the Town hereby approves the debt authorized by the Minuteman Regional School District School Committee on March 30, 2010 for the purpose of conducting a feasibility study. This approval is made with the understanding that Minuteman Regional School District will comply with the following conditions as put forth in the letter from its Superintendent.

1. The Superintendent agrees to perform an enrollment study as the first phase of the feasibility study.
2. The letter must include a timetable for the enrollment study. It is recommended that both the enrollment study and Regional Agreement Task Force report be completed in time for review by the member towns by March 1, 2011.
3. The letter must state agreement that the enrollment study include the issue of whether the school is viable with the current and future district enrollments.
4. The enrollment study must be accompanied by a strategic plan that outlines the steps the District will take either to increase enrollment; bring school size, programs and costs in line with enrollment; or merge with another district so that per pupil costs are in line with the State average for vocational schools.
5. The Superintendent agrees that each of the five largest member towns, by district enrollment, have a seat on the building committee, with the representatives chosen by the towns.
6. Before phase two starts, the Regional Agreement Task Force's (RATF) work and recommendations must be complete. The RATF's recommendations should strongly consider the following changes to the regional agreement:
 - a) That each School Committee Member's vote reflects their town's proportion of the total student enrollment or at least is modified to take into account that proportion.
 - b) Towns can exit the agreement upon 5 years notice.
 - c) Towns leaving the District will be responsible for bond obligations and have some residual contribution obligation for a period of time.
 - d) Out of district students should pay (combination of municipality and state payments) at least a certain percentage of in-district tuition.
7. The Superintendent agrees not to expend funds on the second phase of the feasibility study (architect, project manager, etc.) unless all 16 member towns approve, or not disapprove, of the enrollment and RATF's conclusions.

A true copy of the vote under
Article 58 of the Warrant for the
Annual Town Meeting of the
Town of Arlington at the session
held May 24, 2010.

ATTEST:
Town Clerk

**Town of Arlington
Detail of School Grants
March 16, 2012**

	<u>Undesignated</u>	<u>Encumbrances</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
0480 Academic Support Services	1,810.19	0.00	1,810.19
— 0490 Kindergarten Enhancement	21,040.88	0.00	21,040.88
0560 Enlivening Elementary Educ	1,578.10	0.00	1,578.10
0570 Essential School Health	4,378.96	330.00	4,048.96
0750 Residential School Tuition	674,374.00 ✓	0.00	674,374.00
0770 Language Instruction	2,097.81	4,418.80	(2,320.99)
0790 Improving Education Quality	12,255.02	1,250.00	11,005.02
0810 Title 1	18,649.39	0.00	18,649.39
0920 Drug Free School CFDA#84.186	240.91	0.00	240.91
0930 Early Partnership VI	3,785.41	0.00	3,785.41
0940 SPED 94-142 Allocation	31,551.80	1,775.00	29,776.80
0960 SPED Professional Dev & Train	8,102.34	15,913.34	(7,811.00)
1020 Educational Jobs Bill	829.63	0.00	829.63
1320 Metco Grant	226,962.21 —	63,834.00	163,128.21
1420 Elementary Ace Program	13,965.00	0.00	13,965.00
1810 TAH Direct Federal	(18,126.23)	85,479.68	(103,605.91)
1870 HS Science	532.43	0.00	532.43
1925 Prime Source	1,000.00	0.00	1,000.00
	<u>1,005,027.85</u>	<u>173,000.82</u>	<u>832,027.03</u>

**Town of Arlington
Detail of Other Revolving
March 16, 2012**

	<u>Undesignated</u>	<u>Encumbrances</u>	<u>Fund Balance</u>
1330 Community Education	87,975.75	29,961.60	58,014.15
1340 Bishop Gifts & Grants	10,713.47	0.00	10,713.47
1350 Brackett Gifts & Grants	2,369.90	0.00	2,369.90
1360 Dallin Gifts & Grants	1,633.44	0.00	1,633.44
1370 Hardy Gifts & Grants	5,987.64	1,419.47	4,568.17
1380 Peirce Gifts & Grants	3,599.08	600.00	2,999.08
1390 Stratton Gifts & Grants	350.00	172.65	177.35
1400 Thompson Gifts & Grants	1,560.67	126.61	1,434.06
1405 Arlington School Links Gifts	2,554.00	0.00	2,554.00
1410 Arlington Ed Enrichment Fund	616.16	0.00	616.16
1430 Athletic Fees	(40,405.52)	52,840.08	(93,245.60)
1440 Athletic Misc	55,369.40	1,300.00	54,069.40
1450 Outdoor Education	2,249.74	0.00	2,249.74
1460 Ottoson Gifts & Grants	17.53	0.00	17.53
1480 Instrument Music Fees	33,108.91	0.00	33,108.91
1490 Ottoson Co Curriculum	5,496.32	0.00	5,496.32
1510 Menotomy Pre-School	39,205.83	874.43	38,331.40
1512 Ch71/47 Hardy Extended Day	193,323.62	20,065.31	173,258.31
1520 Building User Fees	491,945.28	0.00	491,945.28
1530 Peirce Field Rental	49,970.00	0.00	49,970.00
1540 GRT/HS	700.00	0.00	700.00
1640 Arlington Partners in Education	6,170.73	0.00	6,170.73
1660 Tuition Payment	320,367.30	0.00	320,367.30
1670 Tobacco/Sanborn Foundation	23,281.56	190.00	23,091.56
1700 Five Colleges Inc HS	240.00	0.00	240.00
1720 Ch71/47 Full Day Kindergarten	505,386.20	0.00	505,386.20
1750 Symmes Medical Use	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
1751 AEF Ottoson Improvement	1,742.50	1,800.00	(57.50)
1760 Culinary Arts Class	225.00	0.00	225.00
1770 Arlington Public School Childcare	58,285.04	0.00	58,285.04
1780 Mandarin	22,627.83	0.00	22,627.83
1790 Verizon: Science	3,745.68	740.00	3,005.68
1820 Traffic Posts Receipts	1,264.63	0.00	1,264.63
1840 Foreign Languages	240,121.93	4,444.62	235,677.31
1860 Ottoson Ace Gifts & Grants	6,126.86	0.00	6,126.86
1890 Gifts & Grants	2,755.47	0.00	2,755.47
1900 Health Award	2,500.00	0.00	2,500.00
1910 Martin L King Jr Birthday	1,103.63	0.00	1,103.63
1920 Bishop Bus Fees	25,247.50	0.00	25,247.50
1930 Textbook Revolving	5,367.07	0.00	5,367.07
1940 Curriculum Revolving	7,995.81	688.75	7,307.06
1950 Guidance Revolving	26,644.30	4,288.65	22,355.65
1970 HS Principal Revolving	20,337.12	0.00	20,337.12
1980 Performing Arts Revolving	(2.72)	0.00	(2.72)
1990 Drama Revolving	8,073.26	0.00	8,073.26
2000 Jazz Revolving	64.96	0.00	64.96
2010 Gilbert & Sullivan Revolving	9,115.50	9,119.00	(3.50)
2020 M Concert Revolving	2,049.00	0.00	2,049.00
2050 Ottoson Drama Revolving	(268.62)	0.00	(268.62)
	<u>2,258,908.76</u>	<u>128,631.17</u>	<u>2,130,277.59</u>

FY 2013 Elections Budget

FY 2013 Elections Budget	FY2012 (2)	Subtotals	FY2013 (3)	Subtotals	
5200 Election Salaries					
Custodial	5,000		4,144		-17%
DPW	650		3,373		419%
Park Ave Custodian	75		75		0%
police	8,600		9,000		5%
Electrician	<u>650</u>		<u>650</u>		0%
	14,975 x2	30,000	17,242 x3	51,727	
5208 Building Rental	110 X2	220	x3	0	-100%
5219 Election Officers (\$760x21+120)	16,080 x2	32,160	16,080 x3	48,240	0%
5223 Office Supplies					
Election Supplies/pens	120		180		50%
TM office supplies	60				-100%
TM Warrant Print/Distribute	4,645		5,000		8%
TM Warrant postage (graybill)	3,300		3,535		7%
TM Print BoS Report	<u>775</u>		<u>775</u>		0%
	8,900	8,900	9,490	9,490	
5236 Elections Other Purchased Services					
Accuvote Hadicap coding	5,400		8,100		50%
Accuvote coding - regular ballots	4,000		8,100		103%
Accuvote annual fee	4,200		4,200		0%
Election constable	700		400		-43%
TM Constable	<u>350</u>		<u>400</u>		14%
	14,650	14,650	21,200	21,200	
5299 Otherwise Unclassified					
Rental Tables & Chairs	2,500	2,500	2,000	2,000	-20%
Total Election		88,430		132,657	50%
State Reimbursement		-7,000	-8,860	-17,720	153%
		<u>81,430</u>		<u>114,937</u>	41%
5240 STM					
Constable	350		400		
Custodial	600		300		
Postage	4,925		2,000		
Print/Dist	<u></u>		<u>2,336</u>		
	5,875		5,036		

Ref 3

2012 Finance Committee Proposed Motions on Water and Sewer Capital Articles

**ARTICLE 42 APPROPRIATION/FINANCING OF CONSTRUCTION OR
RECONSTRUCTION OF SEWERS AND SEWERAGE FACILITIES**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of sewers and sewerage facilities for inflow/infiltration reduction or system rehabilitation, including costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine how the appropriation shall be raised or expended, including the possibility of borrowing all or some of same; or take any action related thereto.

(Inserted at the request of the Town Manager and the Director of Public Works)

VOTED: That the sum of \$1,200,000 be and hereby is appropriated for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of sewers and sewerage facilities, inflow/infiltration reduction or system rehabilitation, including costs incidental and related thereto; that to raise this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is authorized to borrow \$1,200,000 under and pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 7, of the General Laws, as amended, or any other enabling authority and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefore; and that the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager be and hereby are authorized to enter into any agreements they determine to be necessary in connection with the project and its financing and are further authorized to accept and expend in addition to the foregoing appropriation any grants that may be come available from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority or other sources.

COMMENT: This authorization allows the Town to receive an interest free loan from the MWRA and issue municipal debt in support of capital construction projects.

**ARTICLE 43 APPROPRIATION/FINANCING OF CONSTRUCTION OR
RECONSTRUCTION OF WATER MAINS AND WATER
FACILITIES**

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of water mains and water facilities, including costs incidental and related thereto, and to determine how the appropriation shall be raised and expended including the possibility of borrowing all or some of same; or take any action related thereto.

(Inserted at the request of the Town Manager and the Director of Public Works)

VOTED: That the sum of \$950,000 be and hereby is appropriated for the purpose of financing the construction or reconstruction of water mains and water facilities, including costs incidental and related thereto; that to raise this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, is authorized to borrow \$950,000 under and pursuant to Chapter 44, Section 8, of the General Laws, as amended, or any other enabling authority and to issue bonds or notes of the Town therefore; and that the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager be and hereby are authorized to enter into any agreements they determine to be necessary in connection with the project and its financing and are further authorized to accept and expend in addition to the foregoing appropriation any grants that may become available from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority or other sources.

COMMENT: This authorization allows the Town to receive an interest free loan from the MWRA and issue municipal debt in support of capital construction projects.

Memo

To: Arlington Finance Committee
From: Ryan Ferrara
CC: Michael Rademacher, Director of Public Works
Date: March 21, 2012
Re: Article 23 Second Water Meters

The Finance Committee is being asked to consider the establishment of a second water meter program via warrant Article 23. According to the proponent, this proposal would allow homeowners to install a 2nd water meter in their homes for non-domestic water usage. Water not discarded into the sewage system will not be charged to the homeowner via a sewer charge. Examples of non-domestic water usage cited include water used for lawns, gardens, pools and washing cars etc.

The attached October 6, 2011 memorandum from the Director of Public Works recommends to the Town Manager that the town maintain the current policy not to allow separate irrigation meters. Primary reasons cited against establishing a second meter program include:

- The water system is designed to provide water for peak capacity - non-essential water use is often the most expensive to provide.
- Users who refrain from installing second meters will also have non-essential use but have no means to receive a discount.
- Second water meters allow for users to avoid being charged for sewer use. Sewer rates would need to be adjusted to transfer costs from those who utilize second water meters to those who do not to make up for the loss of sewer revenue.

As the Finance Committee representative responsible for reviewing the water and sewer budget, I concur with Director Rademacher's concerns regarding the establishment of a second meter program and add the following points:

- While the proponent has responded to concerns expressed by the Finance Committee regarding potential withdrawals after the second water meter for indoor water use by explicitly restricting the practice within the proposed warrant article, the possibility of homeowner reconfiguring their plumbing to avoid paying sewer charges remains.

- The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Water Resources Commission published a joint Water Conservation Standards document in July 2006. Specific comments related to outdoor water use include:
 - ✓ To promote water conservation, communities and water suppliers should consider rate structures that encourage reduction of nonessential water use. Generally nonessential uses are defined as those activities not required: (a) for health or safety reasons; (b) by regulation; (c) for agricultural production; (d) for the maintenance of livestock; or (e) to meet the core functions of a business. (P17)
 - ✓ Adopting higher water rates in the summer should be strongly considered as this directly addresses peak water use. (P15)
 - ✓ Minimize use of Potable Water and Groundwater for Lawn Irrigation - ...Communities should strive to avoid application of potable drinking water for lawn irrigation purposes. (P 26)

Arlington has been named a "Green Community" by the state committing to reducing energy, encouraging renewable energy projects and utilizing fuel efficient vehicles. Instituting a second meter program sends a clear price signal to customers encouraging water use for nonessential purposes.

- MWRA sewer charges are 77.1% of the total FY12 Arlington sewer budget. Of that charge, 47% is based on population and 53% is based on flow. Population is a fixed cost. The flow charge is based on the meter measurements at the town borders. In calendar year 2010, illegal connections into the sewer system (inflow) and groundwater seeping into the sewer system (infiltration) contributed an estimated 51.8% of the collective flow: 47% population + 27.5% (infiltration/inflow) total 74.5% in fixed costs from MWRA to all Arlington sewer users. The primary argument in favor of second water meters is that users shouldn't have to pay for water which doesn't go into the sewer, however nearly 75% of the MWRA charge to Arlington is a fixed cost with no direct connection to domestically generated wastewater. Since there isn't a one-to-one match between domestic water consumed and treated wastewater, offering any discount on sewer charges to *some* users neglects to recognize the fixed costs imposed on *all* users.

The recommendation to the Finance Committee is to support a vote of 'No Action' on Article 23. The proposal to establish a second water meter program sends a message to consumers to utilize more potable water for nonessential use. Individuals who utilize less water will be subsidizing those who use more water and encouraging nonessential water use is in conflict with state water conservation standards and contrary to the town's environmental goals.



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
TOWN OF ARLINGTON
51 Grove Street, Arlington, Massachusetts 02476
Phone: (781) 316-3108 Fax: (781) 316-3281

Memo to: Brian Sullivan, Town Manager

From: Mike Rademacher, Director of Public Works 

Date: October 6, 2011

Subject: Separate Irrigation Meters

Brian-

I have reviewed the Town's current policy not to allow separate water meters for irrigation purposes. This topic was considered in the past by a consultant hired by the Town (Woodcock & Associates, Inc.) in August, 2000. An excerpt from that report is included with this memo. At that time, separate meters were not recommended. In summary, the report states that irrigation is a non-essential use and whether or not separate meters are allowed, the water rates for irrigation use should be set at the highest level for a community. This is due to the fact that water used for irrigation is typically the most expensive to provide as it comes during the peak demand season.

I have reviewed the policies of our surrounding communities, and while many allow separate meters, they all have set a significantly higher water rate for irrigation use. Winchester goes as far as continuing to charge sewer rates for the water used in an irrigation meter. In addition, of the communities contacted, all require the property owner to incur the cost of installing the second meter and some bill a base fee for the separate meter as well.

It is my recommendation at this time that Arlington continue its current policy not to allow separate irrigation meters. By not allowing the separate meters, the Town is in effect achieving the same result as other communities in charging a higher rate for this non-essential use, but without the expense of administering a separate meter program. A change in this policy would reduce revenue (unless rates were adjusted accordingly), require significant administrative effort to roll out, and would hamper water conservation efforts.

Should the Town decide to allow separate meters, time would be needed for analysis and study of the rate structure to ensure our Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund would stay adequately funded. Much of our current revenue is realized during the warmer months and the potential loss of revenue would need to be offset by adjustments to the existing rates.

I am available at any time to discuss this matter further.

Despite the reduction in some costs, the losses due to some projected increases in metered sales recognition and the one time cash flow gain more than offset the savings. While increases in FY 2001 and FY 2002 will still not be needed, the increases in FY 2003 through FY 2005 would be slightly greater than without the fixed network metering system.

With the fixed network metering system, no increase is projected to be needed through FY 2005. The excess revenues in the first two years will offset the losses in later years.

Without the fixed network metering system, a small rate increase of 0.13% in FY 2001 is needed to recover the projected expenses over the five-year period.

MISCELLANEOUS POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Second Water Meters

As the cost of sewer service from the MWRA has increased over the past decade, many MWRA communities have adopted a policy to allow customers to install a second water meter to measure irrigation uses. Customers that install second meters do not pay sewer bills on the water used for irrigation and can reduce their overall water and sewer bill.

Arlington has decided not to allow the installation of second meters on irrigation uses. We were asked to examine this policy and recommend if any changes should be made.

In looking at this policy there are several considerations that need to be examined. While allowing second meters is perceived by many as a matter of equity – why should I pay sewer bills on water that does not go to the sewers – there are other issues that need to be considered as well.

Many communities that have allowed second meters understand that water used for irrigation purposes is a non-essential use. Irrigation demands often cause the peak water demands in the system and cause local water systems to be designed and operated with sufficient capacity to meet those peak demands. Additional pumping and storage capacity is often needed to meet summer peaks. Consequently, communities are starting to set separate,

higher rates for second meters; setting rates at the highest level to reflect the fact that water used for irrigation is typically the most expensive water to provide.

By allowing second meters, the rates for sewer service to all other customers must be increased to make up the lost revenues. Customers that choose to install second meters are often irrigating larger properties with extensive lawns and/or have large swimming pools to fill. Lower income customers with smaller lots do not find that the cost of installing a second meter is worth the expense. As a result, allowing second meters will tend to shift more of the sewer revenue burden onto lower income customers.

Lastly, customers without second meters often water their lawn or use water for purposes that are not returned to the sewer. In order to treat these customers fairly, customers without a second meter should be provided with some discount for these estimated uses.

It is recommended that Arlington continue to not allow a second water meter. If irrigation uses become too large an issue, it is suggested that Arlington adopt new sewer rates that are based on winter period water use for all customers. With the new fixed network metering system, such a rate structure would be quite feasible.

Winter Water Use Sewer Rates

In many parts of the country, communities have adopted seasonal rates for their water and sewer utilities. One aspect of this is the adoption of sewer rates that are based on winter period water use. Should Arlington switch to monthly billing and meter reading, adopting sewer rates that are based on winter period water use would be appropriate.

Sewer rates that are based on winter water use will exclude most summertime uses that are not returned to the sewer. The best way to do this is to look at three winter months of use and take the average of the three months. This will help reduce the impact of customers that may go away during the holidays or have extra family or relatives return during that period.

Sewer bills throughout the year would be based on the average winter water use. The sewer bill would be fixed for a year and the same each month.